

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting



Annual report of the Trustees 2016



Friends Ambulance Unit vehicles in Dunkirk, First World War

2016 marked the centenary of the Military Service Act which introduced conscientious objection as well as conscription. West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM marked the anniversary in several ways: a talk to the whole Area Meeting about the Act and its contemporary relevance (see page 5); a play, a public meeting and an exhibition of Quaker service in conflict, from which this image is taken (Bath, pages 7-8), and a talk, a play and a display (Devizes, page 14).

Annual report of the Trustees 2016

Charitable Object

The object of West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting is the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain in the area of West Wiltshire and East Somerset and beyond.

Public Benefit

The work of Trustees ensures that income and property are used to further the Area Meeting's objectives as set out in our charitable purpose and in the Governing Document adopted in June 2014. In 2016 this work included:

- Managing the finances of the Area Meeting and its six Local Meetings
- Managing the business and life of the AM in the absence of an appointed Clerk to Area Meeting
- Maintaining Meeting Houses at Bath, Bradford-on-Avon and Devizes with the help of House/Premises Committees
- Employing a resident warden for Bradford-on-Avon Friends Meeting House and a Hirings Manager for Devizes Friends Meeting House
- Contracting Ethical Property Company to manage tenancies and lettings for Bath Meeting House
- Maintaining policies on safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, on health and safety
- Undertaking detailed scrutiny to evaluate the financial, ethical and practical feasibility of a major new tenancy with Genesis Trust, involving a drop-in centre for homeless people at our Meeting House in Bath, and initiating the tenancy. As well as maintaining our income, this directly furthers our social concern with service to the wider community

- Supporting Friends' attendance at courses, conferences and Quaker events.

Beyond those in existing membership of the Area Meeting and those in regular attendance, our Meetings for Worship are open to the public for worship each Sunday as well as occasionally at other times during the week, such as the Friday morning worship held at Bradford on Avon Meeting House and Tuesday evenings and Wednesday mornings at Bath Meeting House. Voluntary collections are regularly made during our meetings for worship for passing to Quaker and other charities which are directly in furtherance of our charitable purpose. The Meeting Houses are also open for hire and use, in line with our general religious and charitable purposes, by community groups that use them for their own meetings. These include visiting school groups, environmental groups, self-help groups, the University of the Third Age, yoga, meditation and Pilates groups.

Trustees in post January-December 2016

Graham Page	Bath (Trustee) until June 2016
Jane Stephenson	Bath (Deputy; then Trustee)
Alan Pleydell	Bradford on Avon (Trustee), Clerk
Gordon Whittle	Chippenham (Trustee)
Jean Thomson	Devizes (Trustee)
Margaret Williams	Frome (Trustee)
Catherine Whybrow	Frome (Deputy)
Chris Pollock	Trowbridge (Trustee), Treasurer

Governance and Conduct

Six members of the Area Meeting Finance & Property Committee make up the Trustee body. They are appointed by Area Meeting following nomination by the constituent Local Meetings. If the LM can also bring forward a name, a deputy is also appointed. The appointment of Trustees is subject to receipt of satisfactory references, one from inside the Society of Friends and one from

outside which must refer particularly to financial integrity. A nominated Trustee must also sign a formal Trustee Declaration based on the pro-forma from the Charity Commission, which establishes that the Friend is a fit and proper person to oversee financial, governance and employment matters in the Area Meeting. These probity checks are carried out by the Clerk of the Committee who also ensures that new Trustees have access to past Minutes and key documents.

Trustees work under the guidance of Quaker Stewardship Committee; they all receive a copy of the QSC Handbook for Trustees of Quaker Meetings. They attend training days, briefings and conferences organised at Friends House and Woodbrooke including the annual conference of Trustees. WWESAM Trustees are grateful for the advice and support given by staff, officers and committees of Britain Yearly Meeting, and for the fellowship experience at gatherings of Trustees. WWESAM Trustees meet about six times a year, always in the evening so that Friends do not have to take time off work to attend. We meet in each other's houses, sharing a simple supper first, which helps us to know each other better.

Property, employment and other management

We own Meeting Houses in Bath, Bradford on Avon and Devizes while Chippenham, Frome and Trowbridge rent rooms for their Meetings. We also maintain the Burial Ground at Widcombe, Bath.

in 2016, Trustees attended to:

- Continuity of qualified supervision of our staff
- Approving and overseeing incidental repair and renewal works necessary to the upkeep of our three properties
- Overseeing the right use of bequests
- Formalising our contract with The Ethical Property Company for the management of our Bath Meeting House;

- Revising our Safeguarding policy
- Continuing exploration of and concluding an agreement with a major new hirer (Genesis Trust) of Bath Meeting House which has involved undertaking a feasibility study and substantial alterations to accommodate their needs
- Beginning a detailed review and revision of all our policies and procedures (reference documents) to bring them up to date and consolidate them.

Work on the documentation relating to our beneficial ownership of the three meeting houses is still not complete but a former Trustee has undertaken to finish this in 2017.

Using the risk register adopted in 2013, we can confirm that there were no serious incidents or other matters in the year which we should bring to the attention of the Charity Commission.

Finance

Our financial position and financial arrangements are set out in the Annual Accounts, available separately.

Our Bankers

CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4JQ

Triodos Bank, Deanery Road, Bristol BS1 5AS

Co-op Bank, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP

Santander Bank, Bootle, Merseyside L30 4GB.

Our Insurers

Congregational & General Insurance plc, Curren House, Curren Street, Bradford BD1 5BA

Our Accounts Examiners

Blomfields, The Courtyard, 33 Duke Street, Trowbridge BA14 8EA.

The Life of our Area Meeting

In addition to our regular Area Meetings held throughout the year bringing all six Local Meetings together to conduct our joint business, we sent representatives to national and international conferences and workshops on Quaker social and peace concerns to develop our learning and continue to improve and develop our practices through their extensive reports back.

These included:

- Quaker Peace and Social Witness Annual conference in April on the theme **Being Change – Making Change**
- A national workshop on death and bereavement run by Quaker Life also in April
- Two training sessions preparing members in the Quaker clerking role: the preparation and chairing of meetings according to Friends' unique Business Method
- Talks given at our Area Meetings:
 - March, Devizes: Robin Brookes on **The Military Service Act 1916 and Conscientious Objectors**
 - June, Frome: Jackie Bagnall, Director of Peace and Global Studies from Sidcot School on **Placing Peace at the Heart of Education**
 - October, Bath: Melanie Jameson on **A Fairer Criminal Justice System**
 - December, Chippenham: Cora and Rob Gallagher on their work in **Mizoram (India) and Bangladesh**
- The Europe and Middle East Young Friends Gathering in August
- A one-day visit by seven members to Friends House in London in October to learn about the central work carried out nationally in furtherance of our concerns.

We also appointed a new Visiting Prison Chaplain to continue our regular support and witness to prisoners at Erlestoke Prison

Our membership and attendance have varied as indicated in the following table:

Year	Members	Attenders
2013	174	131
2014	175	141
2015	181	120
2016	187	130

The Area Meeting website wwesquakers.org.uk provides information on the six local meetings, notes on Quakerism and links to Britain Yearly Meeting.

*Alan Pleydell
Clerk of WWESAM Finance & Property Committee (Trustees)*

Bath

2016 was an eventful year for Bath Meeting. From musical concerts, through a specially commissioned play, to preparing for and receiving new tenants in the lower floor and welcoming new attendees, the building and the members have been well occupied.

Through the year, the Meeting House was the venue for public meetings and discussions with Bruce Kent a welcome speaker in February. In May, we continued our annual participation in Party in the City, the Open Doors night of Bath Festival, hosting several hundred people during the evening. Those who attended the Quiet Day at The Old Barn at Kelston Roundhill appreciated the resource offered by our Friend William Heath.



I Said No was performed at Bath Meeting House. Here, Arthur and Ivy Ballard consider Arthur's future as a CO

In October, the centenary of the official recognition of conscientious objection was marked by an intensive weekend devoted to the subject. Friday evening was marked by a public meeting at which members of the Area Meeting spoke of family members who had objected to compulsory military service. The highlight of the weekend was undoubtedly 'I Said No', a play specially commissioned from Clare Reddaway, a local writer. Simply staged, powerful and very moving, the play examines the moral dilemma of pacifism versus patriotism and the degrees of conscientious objection involved. Rapsallion Theatre Company played to two packed audiences at the Meeting House before the production moved to the Rondo Theatre in Larkhall.

During this time, visitors to the Meeting House could also see an exhibition of Quaker Service in Time of Conflict, notable not just for the panels from the Quaker Service Memorial Trust and the Peace Pledge Union but also for an interesting display of family history from a local Friend.

At the local British Legion Ceremony of Remembrance, Bath Friends once again laid a wreath of white poppies. A Friend joined a group taking supplies to the Calais refugee camp and another participated in the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine.

After much work and many detailed negotiations, the Genesis Lifeline project relocated from its previous home in Bath Abbey to the lower floor of the Meeting House in December. Every weekday afternoon, the drop-in centre offers warmth, support, clothing and refreshments to rough sleepers and vulnerably housed adults.

The weekly Children's Meeting continues to add joy to the Meeting as a whole. Babies have gurgled their ministry and the older children have played a major part in organising and

participating in All-Age Meetings.

Our Fellowship of Healing continues to meet regularly. Meetings for Learning, organised by Elders, have been gratifyingly well attended. We have discussed: Vocal Ministry; Preparation for Britain Yearly Meeting - Faith in Action; the Peace Testimony; Naming the Mystery. An Attenders' day was held in June, Overseers have continued to nourish both body and spirit, with their regular simple suppers, followed by discussion or a film.

As we look forward to 2017, we have a new website: <https://bathquakers.wordpress.com/> and are tentatively embracing social media.

Bradford on Avon

The year started well with a day away at Ammerdown, a retreat and conference centre in Somerset. This gave us inspiration to explore some of the issues that were discussed. We have been talking more to each other about our core beliefs and about our individual spiritual journeys. We reviewed our pastoral care and our fellowship groups and have become more aware of the needs of all our members and attenders as well as outreach and the needs of the wider community.

We had an afternoon session at Ammerdown on the changing climate and the Canterbury Commitment on climate change with a discussion about how we as individuals and as a Meeting could take this further. Greening of the Meeting House has continued with LED lights fitted in the car park and a new more efficient boiler and water heating system fitted in the basement. We applied to Eco Church, a project of A Rocha UK, and won a Bronze award for our improvements. We are now working towards Silver. We are grateful to our Warden Klaus Huber for encouraging lettings resulting in a record income.

There have been particular concerns which we have been thinking about in small groups, for example, refugees and our response to their needs both internationally and locally. That is on going. One of our members has joined Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network and, with others, is in touch with helping locally with recently arrived refugees. Another group considered the paper written by the Community and Justice subcommittee of QPSW on 'Vision for a Criminal Justice System' and sent a response. Others read and again responded to Cornwall's concern about the legalisation of drugs.

As part of Outreach Week there was a display in the library. At the Meeting House members gave a presentation, called 'Who do we think we are?', about the history of Quakerism and the four testimonies. The following month, as part of outreach, we invited the Journeymen Theatre. Lynn and Dave Morris, with a minimum of props and sound effects, presented an amazing production of the life of Ada Salter. This was open to anyone and the United Church was packed with people from different groups and churches.

Our regular events continue: The Sabeel World Wave of prayer for Israel and Palestine on Thursdays; the sale of Palestinian goods; Friendly Lunches; film nights; the healing group. Pupils from St Laurence school visited us again on their church trail.

Our own charity collections each month continue and we help with the Christian Aid annual collections. As members of Bradford on Avon Churches Together we support the HUB in Bradford including the debt advice and counselling service as well as the food bank.

We were sad to hear of the death of Martin Davies in July. He had been a long and loyal attender for many years and we greatly

valued his friendship and his ministry. Celia and Martin moved to Muswell Hill to be near their children. We continue to keep in touch with Celia and she has been back to visit us.

The one outstanding and joyful news to report is that our Meeting is growing. Isabel Martindale became a full member during the year. We have more younger people attending. We especially welcomed our new children, Thibaut, Zelig and Jesse, joining Pip. We have a flourishing children's and young people's committee which has been working very hard to support the children and their families. Leading from this, a new playgroup / mother and toddler group has been set up and meets on a weekday. We look forward to welcoming more children in 2017.

Chippenham

Although we are still small, Chippenham Meeting has continued to grow this year. We continue to share clerking and other responsibilities with Friends contributing as they are able and we find this works well for us as a Meeting.

A recent appointment has been that of Cora Gallagher as Visiting Prison Chaplain for Area Meeting to Erlestoke Prison. As part of her preparation for this role she was able to attend a conference for Prison Chaplaincy held at Woodbrooke.

Other Friends have also attended Woodbrooke this year on weekends covering Bereavement and Outreach.

One Member joined the Area Meeting visit to Friends House in London and reported to us on an enjoyable and informative day.

Other Members continue to attend the countrywide Quaker Lesbian group and Area Meeting York Street Artists. Both enjoy the support and friendship these groups offer.

We also attend the meetings of Chippenham Churches Together and support our local Food Bank.

We were able again this year to lay a white poppy wreath at Chippenham Cenotaph as part of Remembrance Sunday and we value this opportunity to bear witness.

We have held several Bible discussions at the home of two of our Members. These were lively and thought-provoking evenings and we plan to continue them.

Nine Friends attended Chippenham Meeting Away Day at Bradford on Avon Meeting House. They enjoyed a short Meeting for worship, discussion on two Advices and Queries, a walk to Barton Farm where several joined an open-air drumming session and a group art activity, and of course, that well-known Quaker activity, tea and cakes! We thank Bradford on Avon Meeting for the generous loan of their Meeting House.

Our newsletter has gone from strength to strength under new editorship and with this and home visits by Friends we are able to keep in touch with those Members no longer able to attend Meetings for Worship.

Looking back, we can give thanks for another loving and fulfilling year for Friends of Chippenham Meeting.

Devizes

2016 saw the meeting moving forward and connecting with the wider community. We achieved the bronze Eco Church award in November and this was particularly pleasing because we are part of a small sub group of Churches Together aiming to make all our churches more sustainable. We had followed the Sustainability Toolkit but decided to use the Eco Church scheme in order to work with other churches supporting each other with ideas and actions.

The meeting house has also begun to host regular public meetings for Sustainable Devizes.

We have continued to support a small Devizes Multi-faith group, hosting meetings and holding a second well attended tea party in December.



Interfaith tea at Devizes Meeting House in December

Churches Together holds a Songs of Praise event at the wharf each summer and in 2016 the meeting helped to organise the event which was attended by over 100 people. It was a joyful afternoon helped by warm sunshine and the playing of a group of local musicians from the churches.

We held our regular all age meeting, which this year was not dampened by rain, in Hillworth Park at the Quaker Burial Ground.

Paul Longden who spent time with EAPPI at the end of 2015 spoke to us about his experiences, concentrating on the provision of water.

We held three coffee mornings during the year, one of which, during Fairtrade Fortnight, took the form of a brunch at which we

served a cooked breakfast – exhausting but enjoyable!

During Quaker Outreach Week, we enjoyed a talk by Andrew Studdert Kennedy, rector of St Mary's Church Marlborough, about his grandfather, WW1 padre, Woodbine Willie. He gave us a different perspective on the First World War. We followed this in November with a play by Plain Quakers, 'For Conscience Sake', which gave us much food for thought and was very moving.

We were supported by some members of local churches when we laid a wreath of white poppies at the war memorial for Remembrance Day. This is not wholly accepted by the town but we are grateful for the support we receive.

During this time of commemoration of the First World War we have continued with our display in the entrance lobby. One display concerned EEAPPI, another focused on the poetry of war.

Some of us meet monthly in each other's homes in a discussion group talking on a wide range of topics. The range and depth of these discussions has been very interesting.

Booking of our rooms is strong though income was slightly down on that of 2015. Hirers continue to appreciate the space and peace of the building and the garden. Many of the hirers are from organisations supporting vulnerable people in one way or another.

Our library has expanded and the librarians have been busy classifying and sorting our books.

Our work parties have continued through the year following Meeting for Worship and are a source of enjoyment as well as practical work. There is a break for a shared lunch and afternoon tea to finish the day. There is a spirit of sharing in the meeting which enables the necessary tasks to be done. We will need to continue to support each other as we move towards a new way

of clerking and to taking on a professional gardener to help with the regular work.

Frome

Frome Meeting has enjoyed a year of stability, building on our members' and attenders' Friendship, moving forward as a worshipping community locally and within our Area Meeting. We have welcomed a member who transferred from Rugby and several new enquirers and attenders and enquirers; the information packs from Friends' House are much appreciated. An older member has died and we remember him with affection and respect.

We have three Elders and three Overseers who work together as a pastoral care group. This PCG, which meets at least every two months, calls on other Frome Friends if there is a need for their abilities. For example, to help prepare a workshop, to raise awareness of the practice of Clerking and to be an 'upholding Elder' when required. Recently each member and attender has been allocated a named elder or overseer to ensure no-one 'slips through the net.' Two elderly people are supported by MfW in their homes; one sought out Quakers when ninety-nine years old!

The regular attendance of a family with children gives us joy. Children come in for 10 minutes at the beginning of Meeting and return at the end to share their activities. We are working towards getting an established list of adults with DBS and safe guarding awareness to work with our children. Two of our teenagers are active in their Quaker faith and attend National gatherings for young Quakers.

We continue to have shared lunch on the third Sunday of the month and a breakfast discussion group approximately every two months. This year our discussions have been based on sections

of Quaker Faith and Practice. A group of 'creative explorers' meet occasionally to seek inspiration and share with each other. Two Light Groups continue to meet monthly. These all contribute to developing Friendship and to enliven our spiritual life together.

Frome Meeting has close bonds with its local community. We worship in the 'Key Centre' attached to a primary school. One member is closely involved with the Credit Union, which operates at the Key Centre and another is involved with the community garden attached to the Centre. In other areas, two members are District Councillors, others volunteer in the Share Shop, Refugee Action in Somerset East, Sustainable Frome, town council and liaison with local churches. Two members have volunteered in the refugee camps at Calais and Dunkirk. Other members work towards peace with Frome Friends of Palestine, Alternatives to Violence, Stop the War and Amnesty International. Several Quakers have been active in welcoming to Frome two Syrian families and five boys from Eritrea. One member attended MfW at Erlestoke Prison; sadly this is currently on hold.

Frome Meeting practices shared Clerking and hopes to encourage more members and attenders to be more active through a forthcoming workshop. Our correspondence Clerk keeps us up to date with national and local Quaker information. We anticipate that Frome Meeting will continue to develop and its members to support one another as we face local, national and international challenges in the years ahead.

Trowbridge

2016 has been a quiet year for us in Trowbridge. Having said goodbye to one of our attenders who moved to be nearer her family, we have on the whole been a smaller group on Sunday meeting for worship – on average about 5 or 6 people, and

occasionally surprised by 10, mostly well-known faces. We have learnt to be appreciative of many different forms of ministry including unlocking The Hub, welcoming, silence, words, flowers, tea-making and biscuit-bringing around meeting for worship. We were delighted in July to welcome two attenders into membership.

People often say they are drawn to the simplicity of our meeting, including the chatting after worship still in that small circle. But we know it also does not suit everyone. One of our meeting reminded us that 'we do not want to be a group that never lets anyone go'. Sometimes one or other of us will become concerned that, as a meeting, we are not in a position to do great actions in the world, so we keep having to learn humility and appreciate those in Area Meeting who are able and willing to uphold Area roles with such aplomb. We continue to be interested in the world and each seek for ways of making a difference and to share reflections and possibilities.

We continue to encourage attenders and members alike to ask for what they need especially in terms of financial support for attending courses or retreats, because this always enriches our joint life. We endeavour to support each other in ways which are eternal which means sometimes realising our limitations as a tiny meeting without rotas and where the roles of Overseer and Eldership are each held in name by an individual but in practice must be the concern of all.

We recently received a small legacy from the wife of someone who attended Trowbridge Meeting 15 years ago when he retired as a Unitarian minister, and were pleased to be reminded of the rich history of the meeting and people in it.

After lengthy consultation with a member who previously worked in the County Library Service, we now have a generous Library

Trolley, which we have had no trouble in filling. This has made setting up on Sundays physically easier, and the presence of books and pamphlets more obvious and shared, not to mention the extra electric heater for frosty mornings as well as footstools occupying the bottom shelf.



Trowbridge Friends celebrate acquiring their new library trolley

We have occasionally asked a person in the meeting to share their Spiritual Journey with us over coffee after meeting for worship. Although people tend to think their story will be irrelevant the feedback is always one of surprise, encouragement and an awareness of how personal experience is both diverse and overlapping.

In the week prior to Christmas, as is our tradition, we shared silence, but also brought extra things to read, whether Quaker or not. Laughter is also ministry and was much enjoyed. On

Christmas Day when most meetings are shorter and many do not open at all, we had a full hour's meeting for worship and we were seven in number.

We look forward to 2017 and encourage all those interested in joining us at whatever part of the Sunday morning meeting to simply turn up and walk in. Being a small meeting means you are not a distraction whenever you arrive, but a welcome presence. Come to meeting as you are.

Photo credits

The photos of Devizes and Trowbridge Friends in this report were taken by members of the two Local Meetings.

The photo of the theatre production in Bath shows actors Charles Clarke-Devonald and Phoebe Mulcahy of Rapsallion Theatre and is used by kind permission of Elaine Hicks.

The cover photo is from *A Story of the Work of the Friends Ambulance Unit Oct. 1914-April 1915* by Geoffrey Winthrop Young, used in research for the Quaker Service exhibition.

Location of our six local meetings



West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting

Registered address:

Friends Meeting House
1 Whiteheads Lane
Bradford on Avon
BA15 1JU

Registered Charity Number 1134534